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*X_X_X_X_X_X_X_X_X_X- **A U D I O** H E R E -X_X_X_X_X_X_X_X_X*
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# Ecclesiastes
## *Part 6: Counsel for Better Living I*
*By Rev. Bruce A. Shields*

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**SERMON TIMELINE**

1. Introduction & Prologue
2. The Search for Meaning I
3. The Search for Meaning II
4. Solomon's Observations I
5. Solomon's Observations II
6. Counsel for Better Living

**Today is Sunday. November 24th, 2024**

**INTRODUCTION**

In the first six chapters of Ecclesiastes, Solomon talks about his search for the meaning of life. Most scholars agree that Solomon not only wrote Ecclesiastes because of extensive research and scripture comparison with Proverbs and Kings but it was written near the end of his life after falling away from God.

A few weeks ago, we looked at the warning God gave Solomon about foreign women and how they would draw him away from God, which was precisely what happened. ***Ecclesiastes 1:1-2:24*** is the reflection of a lost man searching for meaning. A man who has everything one would want by the world's standards. Riches and kingdoms, endless women, properties, great pools and gardens, respect, everything the world says one should chase after.

But instead of finding happiness, he is sad, lonely, depressed, and feels like it would have been better never to be born at all. What is the meaning of life?

We then read about Solomon's observations during his search in ***Ecclesiastes 3:1-6:12***.

He began repeating his conclusion repeatedly, "life under the sun" (on earth) is vain and pointless.

Solomon then realizes that, apart from God, there is no purpose and, therefore, no meaning. Apart from God, all we say and do is vain and selfish. He begins to "see the light," as it were, and find purpose and meaning.

There is good one can do on earth, provided one is blessed by God (***Ecclesiastes 2:24-26; Ecclesiastes 5:18-20***)

During this time, Solomon realizes the value of friendship (***Ecclesiastes 4:9-12***) and, as we spoke about this last week, the proper way to worship God (***Ecclesiastes 5:1***).

In the last six chapters of Ecclesiastes, Solomon will use his God-given Wisdom and share counsel through a mixture of proverbs and narration, all designed to make the MOST of life "under the sun."

There is far too much to cover in detail in one series, so we will just survey Solomon's counsel as we go through the last six chapters.

Some of these verses may sound down or even depressing. Still, we will look at them in the context of Ecclesiastes to see their meaning, because this is the

beginning of the upswing in Solomon's writings. By the end, we will see that life only has meaning if we belong to God.

**SCRIPTURE REFERENCE - *Ecclesiastes 7:1-14***

*"Better is a good name than good oil, And better is the day of one's death than the day of one's birth.*

*2 Better to go to a house of mourning Than to go to a house of feasting Because Death is the end of all mankind, And the living puts this in his heart.*

*3 Better is sorrow than laughter, For when a face is sad, a heart may be merry. 4 The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, While the heart of fools is in the house of gladness.*

*5 Better to listen to the rebuke of a wise man Than for one to listen to the song of fools.*

*6 For as the crackling sound of thorn bushes under a pot, So is the laughter of the fool;*
*And this too, is vanity.*

*7 For oppression gives a wise man over to madness, And a bribe destroys the heart.*

*8 Better is the end of a matter than its beginning; Better is patience of spirit than haughtiness of spirit.*

*9 Do not be eager in your spirit to be worried, For worry rests in the bosom of fools.*

*10 Do not say, "Why is it that the former days were better than these?" For it is not from wisdom that you ask about this.*

*11 Wisdom along with an inheritance is good And an advantage to those who see the sun.*
*12 For wisdom is a shadow of protection as money is a shadow of protection, And the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom preserves the lives of its masters.*

*13 See the work of God, For who is able to straighten what He has bent?*

*14 In the day when there is good be of good cheer, But in the day when there is evil see— God has made the one as well as the other So that man will not find out anything that will be after him."*

**I. HONOR IS BETTER THAN LUXURY**

**a. A good name is better than good oil**

i. Solomon is praising the value of a good reputation

1. *"A good name is to be chosen over great wealth, Favor is better than silver and gold."* ***Proverbs 22:1***

ii. "good oil" is symbolic of wealth and luxury

**b. Why is a good name better than a life of luxury?**

i. Solomon has written extensively in previous chapters about wealth and all the sorrows that come with it.

ii. The only way to have any joy in anything is if God grants you the ability to have joy. Otherwise, everything you obtain is for nothing and will never be satisfied.

In other words, in the little time we have in this life, it is better to make a good name for yourself than accumulate wealth that will never bring peace, never provide meaning, and leave it all behind when you die to face Judgment.

## II. YOUR DEATHDAY IS BETTER THAN YOUR BIRTHDAY

**a. The day of death is better than the day of one's birth**

i. This statement sounds negative, but it's not when taken in context!

ii. This statement assumes you made a good name for yourself, as stated in the previous verse!

**b. How is it better?**

i. The day of one's birth is the beginning of sorrow

1. Job observed this, even cursing the day of his birth (***Job 14:1; 3:1-3***)
2. Jeremiah too (***Jeremiah 20:14-18***)

ii. But for the righteous, our day of death is the *BEGINNING* of eternal bliss!

1. *"The **righteous man** perishes, and no man puts it upon his heart; And **men of lovingkindness** are gathered away, while no one understands. For the **righteous man** is gathered away*

*from **evil**, 2 He enters into peace; They rest in their beds, Each one who walked in his upright way." **Isaiah 57:1-2***

**2. We finally enter into perfect peace and rest!**

**iii.** For the righteous, we go to be with the Lord!

**1.** *"For to me, **to live is Christ and to die is gain**. 22But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know what I will choose. 23 But **I am hard-pressed between the two**, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, **for that is very much better**, 24 yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake." **Philippians 1:21-24***

**iv.** And the righteous will be blessed to be at rest from labors!

**1.** *"And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, "Write, '**Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord** from now on!'" "Yes," says the Spirit, "so that **they may rest from their labors**, for their **deeds** follow with them." **Revelation 14:13***

**2.** Paul said, If I am to live on earth, then this means I will have fruitful labor.

**a.** He will live for the Lord and produce fruit in this life

**3.** This is the building of treasures in heaven instead of on earth where it will be left and eventually destroyed!

**a.** The work you do now for the Lord brings you rest for eternity.

Which is why your deathday is better than your birthday, and why Solomon says next, a funeral is better than a party!

## III. A FUNERAL IS BETTER THAN A PARTY

### a. Better to go to a house of mourning than a house of feasting

**i.** Everybody loves to party at sometime in their life

**ii.** But it wold be better to attend a funeral, and be reminded of the true meaning of life, and that our time I short.

**1.** "*Because Death is the end of all mankind…"*

**a.** Our "life under the sun" is not forever

**b.** We must all die and face Judgment

**i.** *"it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment,"* ***Hebrews 9:27***

**2.** "*And the living puts this in his heart"*

**a.** A funeral reminds us of the brevity of life and the coming death

**b.** A funeral forces us to face reality and encourages us to prepare for it…therefore, a funeral is better than a party.

**b. Sorrow is better than laughter**

**i.** Solomon explains further why even sorrow is better than laughter

**ii.** Laughter does have its place! But sorrow is superior to making the heart better!

**1.** *"And all discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful, but to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness."* ***Hebrews 12:11***

**2.** What do counselors say to those who struggle?

**a.** Acknowledge the hurt

**b.** Accept it

**c.** Experience it, feel it

**d.** Not only will you recover from it, but you will GROW from the fruit, properly dealing with what the feelings and emotions bring.

**e.** To bury, hide, ignore, or deny these things, masking with humor, ignoring with parties, or even self-medicating with laughter, is only a temporary fix and foolish.

**3.** Many suffer needlessly today because they are unwilling to deal with their issues and, thus, continue in their brokenness.

**iii.** Sorrow is better than laughter because sorrow comes from dealing with things that lead to healing. In contrast, laughter only provides a temporary reprieve from the pain for a little while, which never heals and leads to other struggles and heartache in life.

iv. Sorrow opens us to reality and motivates us to make positive changes in our lives and grow.

v. For this reason, a wise person will be found at a funeral parlor while the fool chases parties and distractions.

**c. Better to hear a rebuke of a wise man than a song of fools**

i. A rebuke from the wise does much good, while the songs of fools only mask, hide and cause distraction from reality.

ii. The songs of fools is like the crackling of thorns in a fire.

1. And like so, laughter and songs as a distraction are also foolish.

**CONCLUSION –**

What has Solomon taught us thus far about better living?

Our primary concern should not be what we can get, have, obtain, or how much wealth, property, and possessions we can get, but rather, there is an end coming to our lives.

One day, I will face the Lord and Judgment.

In the end, did I focus on serving the Lord in my life or me?

Everything you obtain in life will be lost when you die. Everything we build for the Lord (our works on earth as described in the Book of James) will follow us into eternity, where we will have peaceful rest because of our labors now.

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